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Letter dated 16 June 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia related to the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia dated 15 June 2000 (see annex).

May I request your kind assistance in having the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Peter **Chkheidze**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 16 June 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia is concerned by the intensified violence in Abkhazia, Georgia, which has already turned into a well established sequence of deliberate acts. The Abkhaz regime has not been sparing in efforts aimed at legalizing the forcibly changed demographic situation as a consequence of the ethnic cleansing, and creating unbearable living conditions for the Georgian returnees in the Gali district. Moreover, threats to repeat the Gali events of May 1998 have become a common denominator of the developments in the region.

Once again we have to state that the violence that has erupted in the Gali district is a logical outgrowth of the escalating situation of gross violations of the rights of the peaceful population by the Abkhaz regime, abetting the smuggling of arms and drugs. In this context, the issue of prevention of the flow of arms into the conflict zone remains at the top of the agenda. The basis for consolidating the efforts of the international community in this respect is derived from Security Council resolution 876 (1993). The critical nature of the situation in the zone of conflict is manifested in systematic and gross violations of the rights of the peaceful population by the Abkhaz side, including robberies on ethnic and gender grounds, violations of property rights, demands for "residence permits" from the returnees and their harassment, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Security Council on 24 April 2000 (S/2000/345). Abolishing instruction in their native language for the Georgian population has elements of the crime of genocide under international law.

The refusal to cooperate with the representatives appointed by the Georgian side to the Joint Investigation Group serves as another litmus test, revealing violations of the obligations of the Abkhaz regime under the peace process. This case renders self-evident the responsibility of the Abkhaz side in the deterioration of the security situation in the zone of conflict.

Facing these challenges, the Government of Georgia declares that it will make all efforts to promote security in the zone of conflict and achieve a comprehensive resolution of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia. In this respect, we attach great importance to the document on the distribution of constitutional competencies between the central authorities of Georgia and the authorities of Abkhazia, Georgia, drafted by the United Nations and the group of Friends of the Secretary-General. The programme of economic rehabilitation of the region produced by the United Nations Development Programme is equally important for the settlement of the conflict. The implementation of the programme will start as soon as the political status of Abkhazia within Georgia is determined.

The Government of Georgia reaffirms the unacceptability of any act of violence directed at undermining the process of peaceful resolution. We condemn the tensions in the zone of conflict stemming from the failure of the Abkhaz side to meet its obligations under the peace process and the Security Council resolutions. As a result the refugees and internally displaced persons from Abkhazia, Georgia,

are still deprived of their fundamental right of unconditional and safe return to their homes.

The Government of Georgia calls on the Secretary-General, his Special Representative, the Security Council, the States members of the group of Friends of the Secretary-General, the Russian Federation as facilitator and the specialized agencies of the United Nations to intensify their efforts in Gali district for the purpose of ensuring security as well as full implementation of the Security Council resolutions.

Tbilisi
15 June 2000